



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 6, 2008

CONTACTS:

Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158
Rebecca Rausch	217/782.7355
Mike Claffey	312/814.3957 (IDOT)
Marisa Kollias	312/814.4693 (IDOT)
Brian Williamsen	217/720.0443 (IDOT)

Gov. Blagojevich announces \$8.3 million for communities to create Safe Routes to School

Program is designed to encourage walking and biking; promoting a healthier, more active lifestyle for children in grades K-8

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today announced \$8.3 million for 112 projects across the state as part of a new federally funded program designed to make it safer for kids to walk and bike to school. The funding will be used for engineering improvements as well as enforcement, encouragement, evaluation and education efforts.

“The great thing about this program is that it not only provides resources so that local communities can make it safer for young children to walk and ride to school, but it also has inspired educators, parents and others to think creatively about how to promote a healthier lifestyle among our young children,” said Gov. Blagojevich.

The grants announced today are the first of three years worth of funding that will be provided to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) under the nationwide Safe Routes to School Program that was created by the 2005 federal transportation bill. Schools serving grades K through 8 are eligible for the 100 percent federally funded program. No local or state match is required.

IDOT Secretary Milton R. Sees said that the agency received 298 applications that included 1,042 projects for a total of \$77.7 million.

“It was a challenge for us to sort through so many worthy projects. We were very impressed with the quality of the proposals,” Sees said. “We encourage applicants that did not receive funding this time to apply again in the next round. We also strongly urge schools and communities to consider implementing low and no cost solutions that will improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.”

“Education isn’t just reading, writing and arithmetic, we’ve got to educate the whole student, mind and body,” said State School Superintendent Christopher A. Koch. “Walking and biking to school encourages an active lifestyle in today’s students that hopefully will stay with them throughout their entire life.”

Examples of projects that received funding include construction and repair of sidewalks and curbs, construction of walking/bike paths, installing pedestrian islands, erecting signs and improving traffic signals, student safety education programs, training of crossing guards and creation of clubs to promote biking and walking. Under the rules of the program, the school, non-profit organization or municipality must perform the approved work and then apply for 100 percent reimbursement from IDOT.

Over the course of the three year program Illinois expects to receive roughly \$23 million. At least 70 percent must be spent on infrastructure projects, while at least 10 percent must go to non-infrastructure projects, such as education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation programs.

Safe Routes to School is a program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration. The program is designed to help communities develop and implement projects and programs to:

- Enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
- Make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
- Facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of primary and middle schools (Grades K-8).

The complete list of grants in Illinois is available on the web at: www.dot.il.gov/saferoutes.